

THE EXPERIMENT STATION

There is a Territorial institution located at this point, the present condition and future value of which are but little understood and appreciated by the people of this city and section. It is the Agricultural Experiment Station, which lies about a mile and a half north of town, on the east side of the Mora road.

The purpose of such a station is that experiments may be made in the growing of fruits, vegetables, grasses and cereals, to the end that it may be ascertained which kinds and varieties are best adapted to the soils and climates of the several sections in which such stations may be located; as well as to determine the methods of cultivation by which the largest success may be secured with any particular crop.

The National Agricultural Department, it is said, objects to there being more than one such station in any one State, the expenses to be born out of the National fund. Hence, where some of the States cover wide extremes of climatic conditions, demanding more than one station to meet and master the divergences presented, the additional stations are supported out of State funds. Such at least is the information which THE OPTIC has received.

At all events, the agricultural needs of New Mexico cannot be fully met by the station in connection with the Agricultural College, located as it is in the southern part of the Rio Grande valley. That valley is admitted to be the agricultural gem of New Mexico, and destined under proper systems and supplies of water storage, to become one of the farming and fruit-growing wonders of the world. By all means it should have an experiment station, to ascertain its own needs and those of similar valleys, such as the Pecos. And upon the labors of such a station, systematically prosecuted and scientifically directed, the future of these valleys depends, next to the wise conservation of their water supplies.

But the climatic and soil conditions in the mountain uplands and valleys, in the very large region of which the Las Vegas section is typical, differ as completely from those of the valleys mentioned, as Ohio differs from Louisiana, or Wisconsin differs from Alabama. Experiments conducted in the one can have but little interest and less profit for the other; and the Mesilla station can no more benefit the Las Vegas section, than a station in New York can be of use to the people of South Carolina. Therefore, for the sake of the agricultural classes in all the mountain regions of northern New Mexico, including as this country does, many of the most valuable farming sections of the Territory, the continuance and proper management of the Las Vegas station is of vital importance.

It may be said of this station that it comprises 166 acres of arable land, together with forty other acres which the station can use, and that all of this can be placed under water. Beside an acqueduct conveniently located, the station has a reservoir covering two acres, with a depth of water from six and one-half to seven feet, which can be increased to eight. Then, too, there is a well of

inexhaustible water, twenty-six feet deep, cold as ice, clear as crystal and thoroughly palatable. This well is supplied with force pump, horse trough, and a considerable quantity of hose; and for it the station is indebted to the present superintendent, John Thornhill. The station did have a handsome barn, two stories high, with roomy stone cellars, and was well supplied with requisite farm tools and machinery; but on the night of June 17th, the barn was struck by lightning, and consumed with all its contents, including machinery, horses, wagons and a large part of the Superintendent's household furniture. The station has never had a dwelling house, an adobe hotel being used for that purpose by the present Superintendent, who is a man of family.

An OPTIC representative recently visited the station and was as much surprised as pleased at what he saw in the way of experimental agriculture. It may be premised that the present superintendent, who has been in charge less than a year, John Thornhill, by name, is an Englishman by birth but an American by adoption and many years' residence; while his wife is one of those thrifty, industrious German women, for the production of whom the Fatherland has become so justly celebrated. Mr. Thornhill is a practical farmer and horticulturist, for many years a professional florist and landscape gardener, while for a number of years he was a successful caterer to the Las Vegas market in flowers and vegetables.

Of course, then, the station had its flower beds in abundance, but they were annuals or those bi-annuals which bloom the first year from seed, since Mr. Thornhill had not been long enough in charge to bring to blooming the perennial kinds. Garden vegetables were also found in all their several sorts; but it was in those which were growing for experimental purposes that this writer was chiefly interested. He found of these, in several varieties each, squash, cabbage, cauliflower, cucumbers, tomatoes, six varieties of Irish potatoes, nineteen varieties of turnips, and several different sowings of sugar beets. Several of these vegetables, notably potatoes and tomatoes, it has often been asserted and generally accepted, cannot be profitably grown in this section on account of soil and climate; but it seemed to the writer that Mr. Thornhill was in a fair way to demonstrate not only that they can, but also which of the many varieties of these as of the other vegetables can be most reliably planted in this section.

In the fruit line, the station has as yet but a small orchard of apples and pears, a small vineyard containing several varieties of grapes, and some promising strawberry beds. Nothing has so far been done in experimenting with the grasses, either for pasture or hay, though the ordinary kinds are raised to supply the needs of the station itself. There was a promising display of oats, but it was in wheat and corn that the chief efforts of the station were being put forth for the present year.

All the wheat was of the spring varieties, and consisted of the Early Wonder, Ruby, Fife, White Pearl,

White Imperial, and a number of others. The corn was of three kinds—pop corn, sweet corn for the garden, and a number of different varieties for the field. Among the pop corns were the Pearl, Golden Queen, and some others; the sweet corn embraced the Livingston, Gold Coin, W. R. Ultra, and others; while in field corns there were the Early Minnesota, the White Dent, the Australian White Flint, the Colorado Yellow Dent, the Leamington, and many others—in fact embracing the best varieties from a dozen states.

But the mere planting of these varieties was by no means the end of the experiments made. To ascertain which variety did best, it must also be learned whether the seed should be imported fresh every year or whether acclimatization improved or detracted from the yield. Hence there were five varieties of corn planted for the first time, and sixteen varieties from seed raised at the station the year before. Similar experiments were made with wheat, as well as other experiments to determine the best time for sowing and planting; while the effort to ascertain the kinds which would do best with the least water, artificially applied, from the ordinary number of irrigations down to none at all, occupied no little space and attention at the station.

It is the opinion of THE OPTIC that the experiment station was doing most excellent work, at the time of the destruction of its barn, with its tools, implements and horses; and that but for this accident, which no human power or foresight could have prevented, the present would have been largely the most profitable year in the short history of the place.

THE OPTIC also thinks that the people of San Miguel county should use every effort with the regents of the Agricultural College, at Las Cruces, and with the approaching Legislature, not alone to prevent the abandonment of the station, but to secure for it such appropriations as will place upon it a power of usefulness never before possessed. In fact, the entire northern part of the Territory is as much interested in this matter as are the people of San Miguel county, for in this station are the possibilities of untold benefit to the agricultural interests of the entire mountain section. THE OPTIC will probably have more to say, hereafter, on this important theme.

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No. 26 Pass. arrive 11:30 a. m. Dep. 1:00 a. m.
No. 2 Pass. arrive 4 a. m. Dep. 4:55 a. m.
No. 34 Freight " " 7:30 a. m.
No. 22 is Denver train; No. 1 is California and No. 17 the Mexico train.

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Lv. Las Vegas 11:30 a. m. Ar. Hot Springs 12:00 p. m.
Lv. Las Vegas 1:10 p. m. Ar. Hot Springs 1:40 p. m.
Lv. Las Vegas 3:30 p. m. Ar. Hot Springs 4:00 p. m.
Lv. Las Vegas 5:00 p. m. Ar. Hot Springs 5:30 p. m.
Lv. Hot Springs 9:40 a. m. Ar. Las Vegas 10:10 a. m.
Lv. Hot Springs 11:15 p. m. Ar. Las Vegas 11:45 p. m.
Lv. Hot Springs 2:10 p. m. Ar. Las Vegas 2:40 p. m.
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Santa Fe, September 7-9, New Mexico Horticultural Society. One fare for round trip. Tickets on sale September 6th, 7th, 8th. Limited to September 10th.

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